



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Much more than a treasure: the life stories of elderly Deaf people

Pfau, R.; Göksel, A.; Hosemann, J.

DOI

[10.1515/9783110701906-001](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110701906-001)

Publication date

2021

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Our Lives – Our Stories

License

Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act (<https://www.openaccess.nl/en/in-the-netherlands/you-share-we-take-care>)

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Pfau, R., Göksel, A., & Hosemann, J. (2021). Much more than a treasure: the life stories of elderly Deaf people. In R. Pfau, A. Göksel, & J. Hosemann (Eds.), *Our Lives – Our Stories: Life Experiences of Elderly Deaf people* (pp. 1-15). (Sign Languages and Deaf Communities ; Vol. 14). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110701906-001>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Roland Pfau, Aslı Göksel, and Jana Hosemann

Much more than a treasure: the life stories of elderly Deaf people

1 Introducing ‘elderly Deaf signers’

The documentary *We were there . . . We are here*, one of the outputs of the SIGN-HUB project (see Section 2.2), begins with the signed comment “History tells the stories of HEARING communities”. Following this, the film title appears (in written English and in sign language), setting the stage for an impressive series of signed fragments from the life stories of elderly Deaf signers. Similar in spirit to the documentary, the present volume can be seen as a modest contribution to filling the gap that is alluded to in the above quote. Without doubt, the life stories of members of the Deaf community are a treasure – or “much more than a treasure”, a phrase that we borrowed from the title of the beautiful poem, composed by Miguel Ángel Sampedro Terrón in *International Sign*, which concludes the documentary.

None of the over two hundred sign languages that are presently in use around the globe has a written form. A direct consequence of this is that sign language communities are traditionally “oral” communities (Byrne 2016), which implies that their culture – including cultural productions – is transmitted “orally” (i.e., in a non-written, visual form) via sign language and has therefore, for the longest time, not been documented. The oldest document that shows the actual use of a sign language, rather than just offering a description and/or dictionary in printed form (e.g., Mallery 1881), is probably the 1913 film *Preservation of the sign language*, in which George Veditz, the president of the National Association of the Deaf, famously expresses in American Sign Language “As long as we have deaf people on earth, we will have signs”. This and a few subsequent recordings are now considered some of the most significant documents in Deaf history (cf. Supalla & Clark 2015). In addition, there are intriguing recordings from the 1930s of Plains Indian Sign Language (Davis 2010).¹ However, while being undoubtedly of significant historical value, these documents tell us little about the lived reality and experiences of signers at the time.

¹ These recordings can be viewed on Youtube; search, for instance, for “George Veditz” or “Indian Sign Language Council”.

When elderly signers are included in recent studies, it is usually for the purpose of studying sociolinguistic variation (e.g., Schembri & Johnston 2012) or to track diachronic changes in a sign language based on synchronic data. In both types of studies, productions of older signers – be they spontaneous or elicited – are compared to productions of younger signers with respect to a certain lexical or grammatical feature (see, e.g., Meir (2012) for the evolution of verb agreement). However, given the nature of these studies, it is clear that they focus on the form rather than the content of the signed productions. A publication type that does offer insights into the lives of Deaf people across the centuries are (auto)biographies, such as, for instance, the fictionalized autobiography of the French Deaf teacher Laurent Clerc (Carroll 1991), which focuses on his early years in Paris in the late 18th century; the biography of American Deaf pioneer Edmund Booth, who lived in the 19th century (Lang 2009); Herring Wright’s (1999) memories of her life as an African American Deaf woman from the 1920s to the 1940s, which offers an intriguing account of her family life and education in North Carolina; and Vasishtha’s (2006) memoir of growing up deaf in India in the 1950s – to give just a few examples.

Most of the contributions to this volume are based on information extracted from interviews with elderly Deaf signers; that is, they are based on autobiographical information and are thus similar in spirit to the latter two works mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, each contribution includes information from various signers from a specific country and thus, the chapters make an effort to sketch a broader picture and present a more kaleidoscopic view of a certain period, event, or development – often offering different perspectives on the subject matter. In this way, the volume as a whole hopes to contribute to the preservation of the unique memories and experiences of elderly Deaf people, and thus, their history, culture, and language – a treasure that would otherwise be lost forever.²

2 The SIGN-HUB project – and beyond

The present volume is an output (a so-called “deliverable”) related to the project “The SIGN-HUB: preserving, researching, and fostering the linguistic, historical, and cultural heritage of European Deaf signing communities with an integral resource”; this four-year project (2016–2020) has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No. 693349). We will describe the goal and the content of the project

² For the importance of digital Deaf histories, see also Legg (2016).

in more detail in Section 2.1, before zooming in on the project component dedicated to the life stories of elderly Deaf signers in Section 2.2. However, the volume does not only contain investigations based on information gathered in the context of SIGN-HUB. It also includes studies by research groups from outside the project that work on related topics; these will be briefly introduced in Section 2.3.

2.1 The SIGN-HUB project

As stated in the grant proposal, the main goal of the SIGN-HUB project was to provide “the first comprehensive response to the societal and scientific challenge resulting from the generalized neglect of the cultural and linguistic identity of signing Deaf communities in Europe”. From a strictly geographic perspective, the project went beyond Europe, as the participating countries were France, Germany, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, and Turkey. The core output of the project – next to this volume – is an open access digital platform (www.sign-hub.eu/), an innovative resource hub for the documentation of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Deaf communities on the one hand, and for sign language assessment on the other hand. The content part of the project encompassed the following four components (so-called “tasks”), which are represented on the platform (see also Geraci et al. 2019).

- (i) *digital sign language grammars* – task leaders: Meltem Kelepir (Boğaziçi University, Istanbul) and Josep Quer (University Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona);
- (ii) *an interactive digital atlas of linguistic structures of the world’s sign languages* – task leaders: Jana Hosemann (University of Cologne) and Markus Steinbach (University of Göttingen);
- (iii) *online sign language assessment instruments for use in clinical intervention and school settings* – task leaders: Caterina Donati (University Paris Diderot – Paris 7) and Naama Friedmann (Tel Aviv University);
- (iv) *digital archive of life narratives by elderly Deaf signers* – task leader: Roland Pfau (University of Amsterdam).

Besides the “task leaders” mentioned in this list, other important administrative tasks were performed by the following project members: Carlo Cecchetto (University Milano-Bicocca), together with Meltem Kelepir, was responsible for coordinating the four content components, Chiara Branchini (Ca’ Foscari University, Venice) managed the dissemination activities, and Carlo Geraci

(Institut Jean Nicod, Paris) bridged the content and the technical part, that is, the implementation of the content on the digital platform. Josep Quer was the Project Coordinator.

The present volume is a deliverable related to component (iv). However, before describing this component in more detail in the next section, we provide below some information on the other three components.

(i) Digital sign language grammars

In the course of SIGN-HUB, comprehensive (yet not exhaustive) grammars have been written for five sign languages: Catalan Sign Language, German Sign Language, Italian Sign Language, Sign Language of the Netherlands, and Turkish Sign Language. All grammars follow the exact same structure, that is, a fixed table of contents that has been developed in a previous European project (“SignGram”). The table of contents together with a detailed manual and a glossary of linguistic terms constitutes the *SignGram Blueprint* (Quer et al. 2017).³ The online grammars contain numerous visuals (images and videos) and are downloadable from the platform. Most of the grammars have been written by teams including PhD students and (Deaf and hearing) senior researchers.

In addition to the five comprehensive grammars, certain domains of grammar have been described for French Sign Language and Spanish Sign Language. Crucially, the platform is expandable in order to add sections to existing grammars and grammars of other sign languages in the future (following the structure of the Blueprint).

(ii) Digital atlas of linguistic structures of the world’s sign languages

Next to linguistic descriptions of individual sign languages, the project created an atlas of linguistic structures, inspired by existing atlases for spoken languages like the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (WALS, Dryer & Haspelmath 2013). The Atlas allows the user to get an overview of the typological variation across sign languages in the domains of phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and socio-history. To this end, four questionnaires were developed and distributed among sign language experts. The questionnaires address approximately 200 grammatical features in total. To date, information from about 100 different sign languages has been implemented in the Atlas. On interactive maps, the users can search the Atlas by grammatical feature (e.g., types of

³ The *SignGram Blueprint* is an open access publication available at: doi.org/10.1515/9781501511806.

two-handed signs, position of wh-sign) and by sign language. Data collection for this part of the project will continue, with additional sign languages to be added in the future.

Clearly, the grammatical description and the typological study of sign languages have an important positive impact both at the community and the scientific level (cf. Pfau & Zeshan 2016), as both efforts “will likely reinforce (or even initiate) the process of language awareness, upon which Deaf identity is built” (Geraci et al. 2019: 34). In general, the linguistic study of sign languages has a lot to contribute, as it adds to our understanding of the possible variation across and within languages.

(iii) Online sign language assessment instruments

The third component of SIGN-HUB has been dedicated to creating a variety of assessment tests to detect lexical impairment and to measure proficiency in various grammatical domains (see Mann & Haug (2014) for an overview of assessment tests in sign language). One key aspect of the project has been to standardize the tests across healthy populations of signers with various levels of sign language exposure. Subsequently, the tests can be systematically used for early diagnosis and identification of language pathologies both in Deaf adults and Deaf children. The tests are available for free; detailed descriptions of each test as well as detailed guidelines on how to use the assessment tools can be downloaded from the platform.

So far, the tests, which evaluate comprehension and production of isolated signs and of full sentences, have been used to assess the linguistic skills of signers of four sign languages: Catalan Sign Language, French Sign Language, Italian Sign Language, and Spanish Sign Language. Data has been collected from three groups of Deaf participants: native signers (exposed to sign language from birth), early signers (exposed to sign language before the age of 6), and late signers (exposed to sign language between the age of 6 and 15).

2.2 Life stories of elderly Deaf signers

We now present in somewhat more detail the project component dedicated to creating a digital archive of life narratives by elderly Deaf signers. First, and foremost, we conducted interviews with elderly Deaf signers (age range 66–97) in five countries in six sign languages: Catalan Sign Language, German Sign Language, Italian Sign Language, Sign Language of the Netherlands, Spanish Sign Language, and Turkish Sign Language. All interviews were conducted by

Deaf interviewers and followed a pre-defined questionnaire; however, the questionnaire was only meant as a guideline to allow for comparison across countries, and the addition of country-specific questions was actually encouraged. In the end, we conducted a total of 137 interviews with 142 interview partners, which amounts to approximately 175 hours of material (see Cramer & Steinbach, this volume, for details on the questionnaire, the procedure, and the interviewers' experiences).

The interviews collected in the context of the SIGN-HUB project are available on the project platform (www.sign-hub.eu/, under the tab "Life stories") – provided that the interviewee has given consent. Moreover, at least a fragment from each interview has been subtitled in English and the local spoken language (e.g., German subtitles for the signers interviewed in Germany). These subtitled fragments can also be viewed on the project platform.

Next to the interviews, project partners in France and Israel digitized pre-existing materials. In France, these were three documentary movies: (i) *1939–1945 Que Faisaient Les Sourds?* ('1939–1945 What did the Deaf do?'), which reports on an event organized by the Académie de la Langue des Signes Française ('Academy for French Sign Language') held in March 2004, which dealt with the situation of Deaf people during World War II; (ii) *La Vie Des Sourds Pieds Noirs Et Juifs D'Algérie* ('Life of the Deaf *Pieds Noirs* and Jews of Algeria'), which reports on a similar event (date unknown) about the war in Algeria (1954–1962); (iii) *Quel Avenir Pour Les Personnes Agées Sourdes?* ('What is the future of the elderly Deaf?'), a collection of interviews with elderly Deaf people in France conducted in the early 2000s. What makes these movies a unique contribution to the documentation of Deaf history is the fact that they have been realized either entirely by Deaf people or under the direct supervision and direction of Deaf people in an effort to preserve their own memories.

As for Israel, a number of life stories from the Deaf archive of the University of Haifa have been digitized. This archive is an impressive collection of roughly fifty narratives compiled over the past 20 years by the late Irit Meir, Wendy Sandler, and assistants (see also Stamp et al., this volume). The signers in the selected recordings are representative of different backgrounds in Israel, and the content of their stories is varied (e.g., Holocaust, immigration, experiences at a school for the Deaf).

Based on the interviews, as well as the materials from France and Israel, a second important deliverable has been created: the 40-minute documentary *We were there . . . We are here*. The movie is based entirely on memories of elderly Deaf signers, and thus offers an unprecedented perspective on their experiences

regarding family, education, work, war, and identity issues. The movie does not contain any spoken language as a voice over; it only features the signed accounts of signers from all participating countries, thematically organized into chapters, and with subtitles. It ends with the above-mentioned poem by Miguel Ángel Sampedro Terrón. Just like the interviews, the documentary is available on the project platform (there are versions with English subtitles, with subtitles in the local spoken languages, and with interpretation in Catalan Sign Language and International Sign).

The third project output is the volume that you are holding in your hands. The volume contains 13 chapters; eight of these chapters are authored by project members and five are written by researchers from outside the SIGN-HUB project (see Sections 2.3 and 3 for details). There are a total of 37 authors, 14 of whom are Deaf.

Together, the four project components, sketched in this and the previous section, will (i) help in exploring and valuing the identity and the cultural, historical, and linguistic assets of Deaf communities, (ii) advance linguistic knowledge on the natural languages of the Deaf, and (iii) impact on the diagnosis of language deficits within these minorities. In this way, the project as a whole showcases and boosts that largely unknown part of our common heritage.

2.3 Contributions from outside SIGN-HUB

Once we had a rough idea regarding the topics to be covered in the contributions based on SIGN-HUB interviews, it was decided to make an effort to complement these chapters by reaching out to colleagues working on topics related to the experiences and the lives of elderly Deaf signers. Using our network, as well as information drawn from online resources, we contacted eight researchers / research teams. Six of them agreed to contribute, and in the end, five of them submitted a chapter.

We are very excited that this effort allowed us to include two chapters from countries that were not part of SIGN-HUB, namely Belgium (Rombouts & Vermeerbergen) and the United States (Fisher et al.), next to additional contributions from Germany (Brockmann & Kozelka) and the Netherlands (Reiff-de Groen & van Veen and Hiddinga et al.). We are grateful to these authors for enriching the present volume with their interesting perspectives on historical, social, cultural, and linguistic issues related to elderly Deaf signers. An overview of all chapters included in the volume is presented in the next section.

3 Overview of chapters

The chapters in this volume are organized thematically into five parts. The two chapters that make up **Part I** report on hands-on experiences related to the interviews and their dissemination. In the opening chapter, *Jens-Michael Cramer* and *Markus Steinbach* introduce the backbone of many of the contributions to this volume, which is the procedural aspects of the interviews conducted with the elderly Deaf in the five countries that have taken part in this component of the SIGN-HUB project. Their survey spans many aspects of the interviewing process, both the preparation for the interviews and the interviews themselves. Among these are the semi-structured questionnaire, how the interviewees were found, what the setting was, how the consent form was introduced, how the interviews were conducted, and what the attitude of the interviewees was to being approached and interviewed. Based mostly on Germany as a case study, the authors also discuss the country-based differences concerning locations of the interviews, the levels of compliance of the interviewees, and the selection of memorable events. They also highlight the challenges encountered in interviewing the Deaf, in particular their reluctance to be recorded (in a few cases), and the mistrust of some of their hearing relatives. They conclude that all in all, the experience was positive for the interviewees as well as for the interviewers.

The second chapter, co-authored by *Jana Hosemann* and *Markus Steinbach*, describes a one-year project at the University of Göttingen, Germany, in which a group of 13 students together with three supervisors created an exhibition based on the interviews with elderly Deaf signers. In the first semester, the students faced the challenge of understanding the content of the interviews; at the same time, they had to select and investigate topics that are representative of the life of elderly Deaf people. In the second semester, the group worked on transforming the content of their research into visual pieces appropriate for an exhibition that was going to attract a broad and heterogeneous audience. The chapter takes the reader through the process of creating an exhibition, starting with the content, leading past the challenges in actually designing and building the pieces and the exhibition, and finishing with the opening event and the outcome of the team's journey.

Part II focuses on social life, education, Deaf culture, and issues of identity drawn from interviews made in Italy, Turkey, and the Netherlands. In the first chapter in this section, *Luca Des Dorides* and *Rita Sala* draw upon the interviews made with elderly Deaf Italians born in the first half of the 20th century and explore various aspects of Deaf identity. Their investigation is informed by Deaf Studies as a political activity and biographical method. Within this context, they

take issue with the assumed binary nature of power relations between the hearing and the Deaf, and couch their observations within the idea that the relation between the Deaf community and the hearing community is dynamic, rather than merely focusing on the oppressive aspects in the history of the Deaf. Against this background, the authors discuss marginalization and oppression on the one hand, but on the other hand, the notion of power as an element that is inherent in every individual. To this end, the chapter reveals attitudes towards language and signing in public, the practices at deaf schools and institutions, and the case study of a deaf dressmaker who went from a functioning professional to a woman who was admitted to an asylum. The chapter also addresses the double discrimination against Deaf women, as typical gender roles are repeated within the Deaf community.

The next article in this section is by *Aslı Göksel, Süleyman S. Taşçı, Buket Ela Demirel, Elvan Tamyürek Özparlak, Burcu Saral, and Hasan Dikyuva*, who discuss the administrative, social, and cultural aspects of Deafness in Turkey in the last 90 years, predominantly through the eyes of the Deaf elderly signers. The chapter, also based on archival material, presents a panoramic view of Deaf lives, ranging from reporting negative encounters with hearing people to highlighting the positive aspects of their productive lives. There are sections on participation in the Deaflympics, the beauty contest for Deaf young women in which the Turkish candidate in 1969 became Miss Deaf World, and the social life and educational practices in schools. Most notable is the section on Deaf activists, educationalists, and association directors, of whom Süleyman Gök (1904–1979) was the most prominent. The interviewees who personally knew Gök, founder of the fingerspelling system in Turkish Sign Language (TİD) and director and founder of the Yıldız School for the Deaf, remember his disciplinarian but care-giving attitude. The whole article is peppered with anecdotes about personal lives, but also about various dignitaries and state officials of the time.

In the final chapter of this part, *Roland Pfau, Annemieke van Kampen, and Menno Harterink* address the issue of identity and intersectionality in a specific group within the Deaf community in the Netherlands: Deaf people who identify as homosexual/LGBTIQ. Drawing information from interviews conducted within the SIGN-HUB project, conversations with younger Deaf people, and information from published sources, the authors sketch some of the challenges that Deaf homosexuals were faced with – within their families and the Deaf community – and how these challenges impacted their identities. Special attention is given to *Roze Gebaar*, the Dutch Association for Deaf LGBTIQ people, which was founded in 1982. The interviews reveal that *Roze Gebaar* played an important role in shaping identity, as it allowed Deaf homosexuals for the first time to interact with like-minded people from within the Deaf community and thus to transition, at

least to some extent, from the hearing to the Deaf world. Thanks to societal changes, for younger Deaf LGBTIQ people, it is easier to embrace their sexual identity, and therefore, they tend to give more importance to their Deaf identity. The discussion of identity issues is complemented with an overview of queer terminology from Sign Language of the Netherlands.

Part III comprises four chapters that center around deafness during World War II, the Spanish Civil War, and the Francoist regime, with two chapters on Germany, and one each about Belgium and Spain (Catalonia).

The first two chapters in this section focus on the theory and practice of forced sterilization in pre-war and war-time Germany and occupied Europe. *Annika Mittelstädt* and *Jana Hosemann* place in the center of their investigation the ambivalent behavior of the National Socialist practices towards the Deaf, as well as the ambivalent interpretation of that era by the Deaf. They note that, on the one hand, the Deaf were being discriminated, persecuted, and forcibly sterilized, but that, on the other hand, they were recruited in the branches of the youth organization *Hitlerjugend*, and that some of the interviewees report pleasant memories of those times. They study this ambivalence in the light of one of the recent tools used in disability studies, that of the difference between ‘impairment’, a biological state, and ‘disability’, a social construct. The attempt of the Nazi party to recruit Deaf people in the branch of the *Hitlerjugend* and to educate Deaf children could then be explained as an attempt to see Deaf people as ‘disabled’ and to ‘integrate’ them into the society (purely for economic reasons). In contrast, the victims of sterilization and euthanasia would be deemed ‘impaired’, that is, as having a dysfunction that should be resolved or eliminated. Another significant aspect of the chapter is a detailed exegesis into the laws of the Third Reich concerning the disabled. The content of the laws and the discussion surrounding them, together with public acceptance, are given chronologically, thereby forming a coherent background to how primarily the Deaf, but also other individuals falling under these laws, were perceived and treated during the unfolding of the war.

The previous chapter sets the stage for *Elisabeth Brockmann* and *Elena Kozelka*, who report on earlier interviews made with victims of forced sterilization and forced abortions and their families. The laws and regulations as well as the post war reparations are discussed in this chapter. The authors note that of the 400,000 people who had been forcibly sterilized, 15,000 were deaf, and of these, 1,600 were killed under the *Euthanasia* program. The Hereditary Health Courts decided who would be sterilized and who would be spared, and although individuals with acquired deafness were also among the victims of sterilization and euthanasia, the Deaf community suffered through the division

between those who would be sterilized and those who would be spared. But the most traumatic source of suffering was without doubt the experience of being sterilized, conducted sometimes under unhygienic conditions which caused long-lasting physical and psychological pain. Phrases like “I went completely silent”, “. . . no longer felt a normal man”, “there was no happiness in love anymore”, “. . . have broken me” speak for the depth of the psychological scars that were endured. The authors also discuss the post-war lack of recognition and acknowledgement, which went on for several decades. They note that today, victims of forced sterilizations are compensated by the allocation of an allowance to the victims on a monthly basis. However, an official and legal acknowledgement that forcibly sterilized (deaf) people have the status of ‘persecuted by National Socialism’ has not yet been accomplished.

Lisa Rombouts and *Myriam Vermeerbergen* also provide information about the Deaf in Nazi Europe. In their chapter, which covers the time of the German occupation of Belgium, they uncover memories of Deaf individuals who have witnessed the war from the beginning to the end. Some of these people have been interviewed within the scope of the *Seniorenproject*, and the others have been interviewed by one of the authors. These individuals share vivid memories about the war, from where they were when they first became aware of the war, to how they fled, sometimes barely escaping the soldiers looking for them, and then to how they returned. The chapter centers around the memories of two Jewish girls, one of whom, Anna van Dam, has also been the main character in a movie. It emerges that among all of the interviewees, these two girls are the only ones who have heard of the sterilization of the Deaf in Germany. Aware of the fact that memory does not necessarily reflect facts as they happened, the authors draw a picture of the life of Deaf Belgians during the war. The most prominent aspect that the interviewees share is the overwhelming feeling of being left in the dark. Thus, this chapter does not only provide us with anecdotes about the war, but also offers a crucial insight about the experiences of the Deaf who live among the hearing.

In the final chapter in this part, *Jordina Sánchez-Amat*, *Raquel Veiga*, *Xavi Álvarez*, *Santiago Frigola*, *Delfina Aliaga*, *Miguel Ángel Sampedro*, *Gemma Barberà*, and *Josep Quer* report on the experiences of the individuals during the Francoist dictatorial regime following the Civil War in Spain (1936–1939). The interviewees mention different aspects of their lives which were marred by the values and fear dominating the society: education, communication, family and marriage, professional lives, and their associations. The interviewees express their frustration with forced oralism and show ambivalence towards their school days during which, on the one hand, they were inordinately punished, but on the other, found a haven for expressing themselves among their peers. The chapter contains vivid memories about the shelters and about the scarcity of food and the acts of solidarity towards

those who were suffering throughout these hard times. The section on Deaf activists during the dictatorship is particularly telling regarding the problems of being deaf, which were compounded by their stance (as communists) against the regime.

Part IV focuses predominantly on linguistic aspects of two sign languages, the Philadelphian variety of American Sign Language (ASL) and Israeli Sign Language (ISL), both of the elderly, and inevitably linked to Deaf identity.

Jami N. Fisher, Julie Hochgesang, Meredith Tamminga, and Robyn Miller's chapter is based on the memories of Deaf elderly Philadelphians, extracted from the Philadelphia Signs Project. It begins by introducing two prominent schools in Philadelphia, currently the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and W.H. Martin School, and moves on to discuss three main themes that underlie the experience of the interviewees. One of these themes is their experience on their first days at school. For some, the experience was terrifying, but the overall feeling is one of happy memories due to being surrounded by Deaf peers. The second theme covers the Philadelphian variety of ASL, the attitude of the interviewees towards ASL, and the lexical differences between the pan-regional variety of ASL and the Philadelphia dialect, as well as the differences between old and new signs and the attitude towards these. The third theme revolves around Black Deaf Philadelphians, whose experiences have been hitherto left out of historical accounts. The authors highlight the systemic racism in the educational institutions especially in the pre-1960s period, and acknowledge the imminence of future studies in unraveling the experiences of Black Deaf Philadelphians.

Drawing on the productions of elderly signers who are the first generation of signers of ISL, *Rose Stamp, Svetlana Dachkovsky, and Wendy Sandler* explore a time expression (TIME-PASS), which broadly refers to the passage of time. They observe that this sign has two different prosodies. It may constitute its own intonational phrase, or it may introduce an intonational phrase. Coupled with these are differences in the rhythmic pattern in the cyclic manual part of the sign, all of which furthermore tend to co-occur with a cluster of non-manual markers. Based on these observations, the authors claim that the two different exponents of this time expression in fact signal two different discursive functions. One (TIME-PASS1) demarcates background information, evaluation, and connection between larger units. The other (TIME-PASS2) is more temporal in nature, is similar to perfective aspect, and is followed by time adverbials. The authors draw our attention to the cyclic gesture referred to in the literature as embodying 'time as motion through space', and suggest that this metaphor can be expanded to 'motion through discourse'.

Part V, the final section of the book, is devoted to a care home for the elderly Deaf, *De Gelderhorst* in Ede in the Netherlands. The first chapter in this part is by *Judith Reiff-de Groen* and *Peter van Veen* and provides a history of the care home, starting with its predecessor, *Dovenvreugd*, established in the early 1950s. In 1972, as a result of an initiative of the board, who tried to solve the overcrowding problem, this care home gave way to *De Gelderhorst*. Both of these institutions were run by hearing people, and communication was through spoken language accompanied by gestures. The principles were initially laid down by hearing people, then to be revised following the input from Deaf people. The situation began to change in the 1980s. The authors highlight the momentum in favor of Deaf identity and Deaf culture in later years, which resulted in informed care for the psychological well-being of the residents. The chapter continues with expounding the mission and the core tasks of *De Gelderhorst*, the primary ones being self-reliance, and establishing sign language as the medium for communication. The chapter ends with a vision for the future and activities of the residents of *De Gelderhorst*, one of which is to build bridges with the hearing world.

The second article about *De Gelderhorst* is by *Anja Hiddinga* in collaboration with a Research Collective. This chapter complements the previous one by building upon interviews conducted with the residents, their attitudes towards living in a home away from the hearing world, and by couching these in an ethnographic study of the significance of socialization among the Deaf, cultural identity, and the feelings of belonging to one's kindred group. The notion of a carescape was the underlying source for an environment in which Deaf people can feel cared for and understood. The patronizing behavior of the hearing towards the Deaf and the controlling tendencies that come with this are said to create an environment in which the Deaf felt and still feel isolated. Institutions such as *De Gelderhorst* counter this attitude because it gives self-reliance to the Deaf, caters for different communicative needs, and in a language, i.e., sign language, that they are familiar with, even though some of the residents are not fluent in NGT. The authors also discuss the diversity among Deaf people and different senses of belonging, which are linked to different motivations for wanting to move into *De Gelderhorst*.

4 Notation conventions

In the text and in examples, signs are presented in SMALL CAPS. Obviously, these glosses do not tell us anything about the form of the sign, they only function as an approximation of the sign's meaning (using written English as language of

representation). When necessary, the form of a sign is explained in the text or illustrated by means of an image. The gloss IX refers to a pointing sign (index finger extended); when two words are necessary to gloss a single sign, they are separated by a hyphen (e.g. TIME-PASS).

Most of the contributions to this volume make use of quotes from interviews with signers. As for the chapters by SIGN-HUB authors, these come, for the most part, from interviews with elderly signers that have been conducted in the context of the project. All quotes – no matter whether they stem from interviews conducted by the authors themselves or from previously published interviews – are presented in italics; shorter quotes appear in the running text between double quotation marks, longer ones in a separate indented paragraph. Most of the original quotes are accompanied by a source code between square brackets, which usually includes at least a participant code (e.g., M10 for a male interview partner), the date of the interview, and a time stamp. However, some quotes are only accompanied by a pseudonym or a code for the signer.

Note finally that in studies on deafness and sign language, a distinction is commonly made between the use of lower-case ‘deaf’, referring to the audiological status, and upper-case ‘Deaf’ to indicate an affiliation with Deaf culture. We emphasize that we left it to the contributors whether they wanted to follow this convention or not, and some of them explain their choice in a footnote. When referring to a particular elderly signer, for instance, it may not even be clear whether this individual identified as culturally Deaf or not, that is, whether use of ‘Deaf’ would be appropriate. This implies that not all uses of ‘deaf’ throughout the volume necessarily exclude affiliation with Deaf culture.

Acknowledgements:



The SIGN-HUB project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 693349. We are indebted to Markus Steinbach for encouragement and guidance from the very beginning of the editing journey. A special thanks to Michaela Göbels from De Gruyter Mouton for her friendly and professional assistance.

References

- Byrne, Andrew. 2016. Sign language literature. In Genie Gertz & Patrick Boudreault (eds.), *The SAGE Deaf studies encyclopedia*, 832–835. London: SAGE Publishing.
- Carroll, Cathryn. 1991. *Laurent Clerc: The story of his early years*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Davis, Jeffrey. 2010. *Hand talk: Sign language among American Indian nations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dryer, Matthew S. & Martin Haspelmath (eds.). 2013. *The world atlas of language structures online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. Available online at: <http://wals.info>.
- Geraci, Carlo, Roland Pfau, Pietro Braione, Carlo Cecchetto & Josep Quer. 2019. Hidden languages in a digital world: the case of sign language archives. *Journal of the Italian Association of Speech Sciences (Studi AISV)* 6. 31–47.
- Herring Wright, Mary. 1999. *Sounds like home. Growing up Black and Deaf in the south*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Lang, Harry G. 2009. *Edmund Booth: Deaf pioneer*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Legg, Janelle. 2016. Exploring the promise of digital deaf histories. *Sign Language Studies* 17(1). 42–58.
- Mann, Wolfgang & Tobias Haug. 2014. Mapping out guidelines for the development and use of sign language assessments: Some critical issues, comments and suggestions. In David Quinto-Pozos (ed.), *Multilingual aspects of signed language communication and disorder*, 123–139. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Mallery, Garrick. 1881. *Sign language among North American Indians*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution [Re-printed 2001, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications].
- Meir, Irit. 2012. The evolution of verb classes and verb agreement in sign languages. *Theoretical Linguistics* 38(1–2). 145–152.
- Pfau, Roland & Ulrike Zeshan. 2016. Positive signs: How sign language typology benefits deaf communities and linguistic theory. *Linguistic Typology* 20(3). 547–559.
- Quer, Josep, Carlo Cecchetto, Caterina Donati, Carlo Geraci, Meltem Kelepir, Roland Pfau & Markus Steinbach (eds.) 2017. *SignGram Blueprint: A guide to sign language grammar writing*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Schembri, Adam & Trevor Johnston. 2012. Sociolinguistic aspects of variation and change. In Roland Pfau, Markus Steinbach & Bencie Woll (eds.), *Sign language. An international handbook*, 788–816. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Supalla, Ted & Patricia Clark. 2015. *Sign language archaeology*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Vasishta, Madan. 2006. *Deaf in Delhi. A memoir*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.